Working Brief: Data for Adolescent Girls

In recognition of the 2016 International Day of the Girl theme of gender data for girls, Data2X compiled a short technical brief on adolescent girl data collection. This brief is intended as a community resource and lays out key stakeholders and instruments for data on adolescent girls, as well as important issues for consideration related to data collection, analysis, and use. Additionally, we have included an Annex of the SDG indicators related to adolescent girls.

Background

There is growing evidence that adolescence is a period where inequalities between girls and boys widen and where girls become particularly vulnerable to a wide range of challenges and disadvantages. For the roughly 250 million adolescent girls living in poverty worldwide, the onset of adolescence often comes with increased restrictions on mobility, fewer economic and educational opportunities, and greater risk of violence. However, if their unique and particular needs are met, and their rights supported, adolescent girls can thrive and become full participants in their families, communities, and countries.

What was a small field of researchers, practitioners, and advocates at the start of the Millennium Development Goals is now, in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals, a robust field and community of varied stakeholders for adolescent girls. It is now routine for adolescent girls to be discussed and prioritized in high level policy discussions—however, there are numerous data gaps as well as methodological and ethical issues surrounding data collection for girls. Without good data for girls, the global development community, including both policymakers and practitioners, cannot make informed and evidence-based decisions on interventions to reach this population. But gender data must be a priority, as data can have transformative power for adolescent girl advocacy, policy and programs. For example, data demonstrated that adolescent girls and young women were disproportionately at risk for contracting HIV which then mobilized critical policy and program interventions and funding.[1] There is widespread acknowledgement that data on adolescent girls has potential to improve significantly in the next few years.

Key Stakeholders, Instruments, Frameworks

There is a multiplicity of stakeholders that collect or monitor data on adolescent girls across countries, where mandates for global monitoring differ by issue area. However, there are several overlapping areas of data collection, analysis and visualization.

Within the UN system:

- Through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), UNICEF collects data on child mortality, nutrition and health, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, violence, birth registration, and child labor, along with household members' socioeconomic characteristics, and reproductive health.
- WHO has information on adolescent birth rates, leading causes of death among adolescents (including road accidents, HIV/AIDS, suicides, lower respiratory infections and interpersonal violence), as well as years lost to disability stemming from different causes (depression, nutritional deficiencies, and other health issues).

[1] Data Impacts, 2015, "Case Study: Better Data Improves Women's Lives," retrieved from http://dataimpacts.org/project/health-surveys/.

- The UN SDG Indicators Global Database presents indicators on adolescent birth rates and reproductive health; participation of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training, as well as those with access to ICT services; early marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, and sexual violence; time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, unemployment rates, child labor, and "idle" youth (those not working, looking for work, or in school).
- UNESCO has data on education, by age and sex.
- UNDESA has data on adolescent migration.
- UNSD maintains a data portal on violence against women across countries (based on country surveys, a WHO multi-country study, and data from the DHS, Reproductive Health Surveys (RHS) and MICS), presenting the share of women subjected to physical and sexual violence by a partner or other person, including those that have experienced violence since age 15.
- Through nationally-representative LSMS surveys, the World Bank collects data on education, employment from age 10, marital status from age 15 (although in some surveys, it may be younger). Many of the LSMS also collect data on contraception use and fertility for adolescents age 15+, and for 17 countries, LSMS collects data on maternal and child health, as well as reproductive health.
- The Adolescent Girls Initiative at the World Bank conducted several smaller-scale pilots in 8 countries with a focus on employment generation.
- Other specialized agencies such as UNAIDS have specific data points on adolescent girls – UNAIDS has indicators on adolescents' knowledge of HIV prevention and sexual activity, the share who have been tested for HIV, as well as prevalence of HIV, new HIV infections, and deaths from AIDS.
- UN Women and UNFPA also play important roles in compiling, reporting on, disseminating, and advocating for adolescent girl data.

The instruments used to collect data on adolescent girls include the following:

Nationally representative surveys:
- Household surveys (with DHS and MICS having the most data)
- Dedicated national surveys (for example, on health, violence against girls and women, risk and vulnerability assessments, or time use).

Other surveys:

- Administrative data (for example, Ministry of Health data, civil registration and vital statistics)
- Self-reporting by governments and UN treaty monitoring bodies such as CEDAW.

Global indicator frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, Global Strategy 2.0 indicators, the Minimum Set of Gender Indicators, the Social Institutions and Gender Index currently collect and will continue expand collection on key indicators for adolescent girls.

SDG indicators for adolescent girls fall across multiple goals, including those related to specific health concerns such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV incidence, violence, particularly sexual violence, and suicide; harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM/C; education including parity and educational facilities such as single-sex bathrooms; youth employment, unemployment and underemployment; as well as public life including safe public spaces and legal rights. However, across the different types of surveys above, data are limited or not available at all for a majority of these indicators, across all age groups, but particularly for the 10-14 age group. A selected list of SDG indicators can be found in Annex I.

Civil society has played a large role in adolescent girl data collection, with organizations such as the International Center for Research on Women, Population Council, Plan International, Women's Refugee Commission, and Girl Effect collecting and analyzing data on a wide range of girls' experiences and issue

areas with regular reporting and monitoring. Increasingly, there is the exploration of using girl-enumerators in data efforts as well. Data advocacy for adolescent girls has been taken up most recently by the Girl Declaration Joint Advocacy Group and the Coalition for Adolescent Girls.

Key Issues

- **AGE RANGE |** Expanding key indicators for adolescent girls to include the 10-14 age range of younger adolescents has been a critical advocacy point. The lack of measurement about 10-14 year olds means we do not have an accurate or comprehensive picture of adolescent girl issues and therefore, our policy and programmatic interventions may be of little impact or incorrectly tailored.
  - For example, reproductive age is commonly defined as 15-49, but we know from other data sources and program work that there are girls who are married and pregnant in the 10-14 age range—and that many rights violations happen to adolescent girls before they turn 15. There is some perception that young adolescent girls do not experience these issues, or do not experience them enough to be statistically significant at a global level.
- **DISAGGREGATION |** There has been a push for age and sex disaggregation. Further disaggregation can result in a loss of statistical power in surveys that are not nationally representative. However, given the important and observed dynamics of life and opportunity changes in adolescence, having an understanding of the differences between younger and older adolescent girls is critical for policy and program implications. In addition to age and sex disaggregation, disaggregation by wealth, ethnicity, and location are also important.
- **PARTICIPATORY AND QUALITATIVE DATA |** Girls are rarely surveyed directly and viewed as key sources of data. It has been identified that there is a need for further qualitative data around behavioral and social norm changes in particular.
- **GLOBAL AND SUB-LEVEL DATA |** It is important to collect data on adolescent girls at multiple levels. In particular, regional, national and sub-national trends can be key to identify and address differences and vulnerabilities of groups of adolescent girls, including where better data collection is needed.
  - There may also be a role of global positioning satellite (GPS) data, tied to household survey data and other geographically-linked data (such as on displaced persons), on tracking areas/localities that need greater attention.
- **ETHICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS |** There are a host of ethical and methodological considerations when working with adolescent girls and data collection. With sensitive subject areas such as experiences of sexual violence, or controversial ones, such as girls' access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, it can be challenging to structure survey questions and data collection training that takes into account child protection and technical quality of the data. Key questions around power, decision-making, violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights affect adolescent girls but these issues are sensitive and require skill in data collection and there is often reluctance to collect this data for adolescent girls. For these sensitive topics and to avoid substantial errors in measuring key variables, it may be important to use dedicated surveys.
- **RESOURCES AND CAPACITY |** This type of data collection and analysis requires significant resources, due to the type of questions needed for methodological development, specialized training for enumerators, and the sensitivities around both methodological development and data collection. As resourcing and capacity is a challenge in national and global statistics collection in many data areas, it is likely that this has affected the lower prioritization of data for adolescent girls.

ANNEX I: Selection of SDG Indicators for Adolescent Girls

This selection of key SDG indicators relevant to adolescent girls and their specific issues is not comprehensive, but illustrative of some of the particular needs and vulnerabilities of adolescent girls that will be captured as a part of SDG monitoring.

TARGET	INDICATOR
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	
3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.	3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio
3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.	3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations.
3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well being.	3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate
3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.	3.7.1 Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods
	3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years; aged 15-19 years) per 1000 women in that age group.
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	
4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.	4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of the lower secondary achieving at least minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex
4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.	4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.	4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict affected, as data becomes available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated.
4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.	4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment.
4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.	4.a.1 Proportion of schools with access to: (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.	5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
	5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.	5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
	5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and	5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and

domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.	care work, by sex, age and location
5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform of Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.	5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
	5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
5.a. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.	5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.b. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.	5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	
6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.	6.2.1 Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water
Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	
8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, eradicate forced labour and, by 2025, end child labour in all its forms, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers.	8.7.1 Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	
11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.	11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.	16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months
	16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live
16.2 End abuse, exploitations, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.	16.2.1 Proportion of children aged 1-17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month
	16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation
	16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18